

July 19, 2007

Memo To: WSTA Executive Committee

From: Richard DeRock, ACCT Representative

Subject: Substitute House Bill 1694 – ACCT Reauthorization
Special Needs Complaint Process mandates

When the legislature passed SHB 1694, they included a provision that ties our continued receipt of Special Needs grant funds to complying with statewide guidelines for customer complaint processes and consistent information about such processes. The actual language of the subject section of the legislation is summarized below.

(3) To improve the service experienced by persons with special transportation needs, the council shall develop statewide guidelines for customer complaint processes so that information about policies regarding the complaint process is available consistently and consumers are appropriately educated about available options. To be eligible for funding on or after January 1, 2008, organizations applying for state paratransit/special needs grants as described in section 226(1), chapter 370, Laws of 2006 must implement a process following the guidelines established by the council.

The ACCT will need to adopt the complaint process guidelines by October of this year in order for WSDOT to be able to certify compliance for Special Needs grant funding after January 1, 2008. Because of the short time frame involved in this legislation, I volunteered that WSTA, in cooperation with CTAANW, would take the lead to develop proposed guidelines that the Council could consider. The following process summary represents a first cut at this proposal

Proposed Universal Special Needs Complaint Process:

- 1) Complaints, concerns and compliments (hereafter referred to as complaints) will be accepted by all grantees.
- 2) Complaints will be accepted at a minimum by letter, postcard and e-mail (if no e-mail is available, a fax number would suffice).
- 3) Grantees may, but are not required, to accept complaints by telephone and/or face to face discussion.
- 4) All complaints received consistent with the individual grantee's process will be logged and assigned for final resolution.
- 5) At a minimum, all complaints will be classified as either policy (bus should run later) or service (last bus never came).
- 6) All complaints classified as service will be categorized as valid, invalid, or undeterminable.
- 7) At a minimum, each grantee will determine appropriate follow-up actions (if any) for valid service complaints.
- 8) Each grantee will establish a written complaints process including: i) the physical and electronic addresses where complaints are to be sent; ii) a discussion of how the complaint will be evaluated and the types of possible resolutions; iii) whether the filer of the complaint can expect some form of response and the anticipated timelines of any such responses.
- 9) At minimum, each grantee will make the written complaints process publicly available through its web site or if it has no web site, other commonly available media (rider guides, schedule pamphlets or widely distributed documents).
- 10) Annually, by April 1, each grantee will report to the Council, the total number of complaints received and the number classified as policy verses the number classified as service. Additionally the grantee will report the number of complaints categorized as valid, invalid and undeterminable.